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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Support account for peacekeeping operations

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the financial performance of the support account for peacekeeping operations during the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 (A/52/838) and the estimated requirements for the support account for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999 (A/52/837).

Financial performance for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997

2. As indicated in paragraphs 9 and 11 of the performance report (A/52/838), the General Assembly, by its resolution 50/221 B, approved support account resources amounting to $30,534,400 for post and non-post requirements for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997; the total staffing establishment for the period was 346 posts. Expenditures for the period amounted to $28,066,000, resulting in an unutilized balance of $2,468,400, which is attributable to a higher than anticipated vacancy rate and, as was made clear during the deliberations, to variances between the actual composition of support account posts and the average used in standard salary costs for the purpose of cost estimation. Annexes I and II to the performance report provide a breakdown of the approved appropriation and the related expenditures by office/department and by budget line, as well as supplementary information on variances in expenditures. In view of the variances in the composition of support account posts from the norms used to calculate standard costs for the regular budget, the Advisory Committee recommends that in future the vacancy factor for support account posts be increased from 5 per cent to 8 per cent to offset the effects of the variance referred to above.

3. Annex III to the report provides information on authorized posts and the vacancy situation by office/department; the Advisory Committee recalls that, by its resolution 51/239 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit information on redeployments, if any, between units, covering the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 and the period from 1 July to 31 December 1997. The Committee notes from paragraph 14 of annex II to the report that there was a redeployment of two posts from the Procurement Division to the Accounts Division: the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that this was the only redeployment during the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997. With regard to the period from 1 July to 31 December 1997, the Committee was informed that two posts within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were redeployed from the Mission Planning Service to the Lessons Learned Unit.

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4. In the view of the Committee, the performance report is too focused on providing statistical information rather than information on management issues relating to the administration of the support account. The performance report should have been more analytical and should have explained important administrative issues which had impacted on the implementation of the approved budget under the support account.

5. In paragraph 13 of the performance report, the Secretary-General proposes that the General Assembly apply the unencumbered balance of $2,468,400 for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 to the support account requirements for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999. The Advisory Committee has no objection to this proposal.

Support account requirements for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999

6. The report of the Secretary-General on requirements (A/52/837), which was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/239 A, contains proposals for support account requirements of $39.4 million for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999. For the period ending 30 June 1998 the General Assembly appropriated $32.4 million for the support account.

7. Paragraphs 21 to 32 of the Secretary-General's report deal with the in-depth evaluation and comprehensive review of the total human resources requirements for Headquarters backstopping of peacekeeping operations called for by the General Assembly in paragraphs 6 to 8 of its resolution 51/239 A. According to the Secretary-General, an evaluation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, including its Situation Centre, has been carried out; the report contains the following conclusions resulting from the evaluation: "it became evident that the number of regular budget posts (55) together with the number of currently authorized support account posts (224) would not be adequate to support the anticipated workload" (para. 22); the current structure of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is "generally sound" (para. 23); there is "a need to tighten the links between the Office of Operations and the Situation Centre" (para. 24); and "the division of labour between the two departments (Department of Political Affairs and Department of Peacekeeping Operations) is clear" (para. 25).

8. The report of the Secretary-General should have been more focused and analytical. The report should also have provided a summary of the findings which led to the assertions cited above, assertions which have not been supported with sufficiently convincing analysis. Further complicating the situation was the fact that the advance copy of the report upon which the Advisory Committee had to work, and which was submitted to it on only 20 March 1998 (the Committee's session ended on 27 March) contained numerous errors. On 6 May the Committee received an extensive list of corrections to the tables, which is annexed to the present report. The report also contains some statistics which may be misleading. For example, figure I of the report shows that there will be 20,500 troops, 6,300 military observers and 5,100 international and local staff as at July 1998. These figures, however, reflect the authorized level of troops, military observers and staff as at 1 July 1997 and do not take into account the fact that since then the size of a number of peacekeeping operations has been reduced. For example, the number of troops authorized for the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium will decrease from 4,291 as at 1 July 1997 to zero as at 1 July 1998 and the number of troops authorized for the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola will decrease from 6,686 as at 1 July 1997 to 955 as at 1 July 1998 .

9. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee points out that the Secretary-General's report fails to analyse the impact of a trend whereby, *inter alia*, with advances in technological innovation and in communications, more and more of what has been performed at Headquarters on behalf of peacekeeping operations can or should be handled by the missions themselves. This is an important factor in analysing the adequacy of Headquarters requirements. When, for example, a mission has a sufficient number of qualified administrative staff, reliable means of communication, well established logistics support on the basis of self-sustainment and the bulk of procurement is done by the mission, corresponding services at Headquarters should require fewer resources. The Committee intends to revert to this issue in September (see para. 14 below).

10. According to the Secretary-General, "there is no direct linkage between the total dollar level of all active peacekeeping operations and the backstopping workload performed at Headquarters" and "smaller missions require no less support than larger missions and can be more complex to administer" (A/52/837, para.32). The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that such conclusions reflect an overly simplistic approach by the Secretariat to the question of backstopping. The report should have contained a functional analysis of the backstopping requirements of peacekeeping operations as they relate to the implementation of their mandates (military, civilian police, human rights

monitoring, humanitarian, electoral assistance). The Committee points out that the backstopping requirements of a mission with mainly civilian police responsibilities would be different from those of a military observer mission, although the number of personnel in both missions could be the same. Moreover, the backstopping requirements of peacekeeping operations are different throughout their lifespan and the report should have contained an analysis of workload related to different stages of peacekeeping operations: planning, implementation, phasing out of operation and liquidation activities.

11. In the course of its deliberations, the Advisory Committee was informed by the representatives of the Secretary-General that the Secretariat is occasionally entrusted with preparations for peacekeeping operations and missions which never materialize. The Committee points out that the Secretary-General's report should have clearly indicated the workload related to such contingency planning and planning for missions that had never materialized.

12. The proposed staffing of 469 temporary posts, compared with the current staffing table of 346 posts, appears to reflect the establishment of 20 new posts, the deletion of 3 posts and the conversion of 106 positions, previously occupied by gratis personnel officers, into temporary posts.

13. The Advisory Committee, however, was unable to complete its consideration of the Secretary-General's request for new and converted posts, owing to the pervasive unavailability of reliable statistics and explanatory information. Despite the effort made by the Secretariat, there were numerous inconsistencies in the report itself between data in the summary tables and data in the specific tables, including misleading narratives. As noted above there were also many errors and subsequent corrections and/or revisions. The final printed version of the Secretary-General's report was not available in time for the Committee to take it into account prior to finalizing its own recommendations to the General Assembly. Moreover, at the time when the Committee had to finalize its recommendations there were numerous outstanding requests for additional information, clarification or analysis.

14. Taking into account what has been stated in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee intends to resume consideration of the requirements for the support account for 1998-1999 in September 1998 after receipt of reliable data and analysis. On this basis, the General Assembly should be able to complete action on the support account before the end of October 1998. In the meantime, arrangements have to be considered which will allow necessary work to be carried out without impeding the mandated phase-out of gratis personnel, taking into account the required lead time for the recruitment of staff against new temporary posts. Under the circumstances, the Committee, at this stage, recommends four new posts for assets management. In addition, the Committee recommends the conversion at this stage of 34 gratis positions to temporary posts, priority to be given to functions related to military expertise and civilian police. Taken together with the 30 vacancies which now exist, the Secretariat will have 68 positions available to fill through October 1998. It should also be borne in mind that there is considerable flexibility to redeploy the 346 posts already available in the current establishment. The gratis positions to be converted at this stage would be unspecified and this interim action would be without prejudice to the post-by-post recommendations which the Committee will make in September 1998 both for conversions and for the new posts which remain to be considered.

15. The Advisory Committee further recommends that the amount to be pro-rated to the various peacekeeping operations for their contribution to the support account be based upon the 1997-1998 level for the support account ($32.4 million), with an additional $2 million for the posts recommended by the Committee in paragraph 14 above. The total would thus be $34.4 million. Additional requirements (up to the Secretary-General's request of $39.4 million for 1998-1999) would be reflected in the relevant performance reports of each peacekeeping operation after the General Assembly has completed its decision on the appropriation for the support account for 1998-1999 in October 1998.

Annex

Corrections to tables in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/837)

Table	*Description*	*Corrections*
Annex I		
3	Office of the Under-Secretary-General	One P-2 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be deleted. Total regular budget posts should be two (1 Under-Secretary-General and 1 General Service (other level)).
5	Policy and Analysis Unit	One P-2 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be added. The P-4 support account post under 1997-1998 should be P-5.
15	Office of the Assistant Secretary-General	One P-5, one P-4 and one General Service (other level) support account posts have not been included under 1997-1998. The number of gratis military officers should be four P-4 and two P-3. These changes are due to the inclusion of the Mine Action Service in the Office
25	Office of the Director, Field Administration and Logistics Division	One P-3 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be deleted. The total number of regular budget posts should be four.
26	Finance Management and Support Services	One P-3 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be deleted. The following should be inserted in paragraph 93: One P-4 post and one P-3 post are requested for the Office of the Chief of the Service. Conversion of two gratis military officer posts (1 P-4 and 1 P-3).
31	Financial Support Section	One P-3 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be deleted.
33	Asia and Middle East Unit	One P-3 post (regular budget) under 1997-1998 should be deleted. There should not be any regular budget posts for this period.
40	Supply Section	Includes the Medical Support Unit; table 41 (Medical Support Unit) should be deleted.
45	Staffing Support Section	One P-5 gratis military officer post should be deleted. The total number of gratis military officers under 1997-1998 should be one.
Annex II		
2	Overall staffing of units involved in backstopping peacekeeping operations	The total number of temporary posts (other) should be 132 for 1997-1998 and 133 for 1998-1999.